

Claims

1. A process for the manufacture of a tea product comprising:
  - (i) contacting black tea with ascorbic acid its salts or mixtures thereof, an oxidizing agent and water for a period of at least 5 minutes; followed by
  - (ii) drying to prepare a tea product that is infusible in water at 5 to 100°C.
2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the black tea is contacted with aqueous solutions of the ascorbic acid its salts or mixtures thereof and the oxidising agent.
3. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the ascorbic acid its salts or mixtures thereof is in an amount of 1 to 8% by weight of black tea.
4. A process according to claim 3 wherein the ascorbic acid its salts or mixtures thereof is in an amount of 2 to 4% by weight of black tea.
5. A process according to any of claims 1 to 4 wherein the oxidising agent is in an amount of 0.3 to 7% by weight of black tea.
- 25 6. A process according to claim 5 wherein the oxidising agent is in an amount of 0.3 to 5% by weight of black tea.
7. A process according to any of claims 1 to 6 wherein the oxidising agent is chosen from one or more of hydrogen peroxide, calcium peroxide, magnesium peroxide, oxygen, an enzyme which can release hydrogen peroxide.
- 30 8. A process according to claim 7 wherein the oxidising agent is hydrogen peroxide.

9. A process according to any of claims 1 to 8 wherein the oxidising agent is added after the addition of the ascorbic acid its salts or mixtures thereof to the black tea.  
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10. A process according to any of claims 1 to 9 wherein the black tea is contacted with the ascorbic acid its salts or mixtures thereof and the oxidising agent for an incubation period of 5 minutes to 24 hours.  
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11. A process according to any of claims 1 to 10 wherein the water is heated to a temperature of 10 to 60°C before contacting with black tea.  
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12. A process according to any of claims 1 to 11 wherein the black tea is dried to a moisture content of less than 5%.
13. A process according to any of claims 1 to 12 wherein the tea product is infusible in water at 5 to 30°C.  
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14. A process according to any of claims 1 to 13 wherein the black tea is additionally contacted with one or more amino acids prior to drying.  
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15. A process according to claim 14 wherein the one or more amino acids are in an amount of 0.1 to 8% by weight of black tea.
- 30 16. A process according to claim 15 wherein the one or more amino acids are in an amount of 0.1 to 2% by weight of black tea.

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17. A process according to any of claims 14 to 16 wherein the one or more amino acids are chosen from one or more of alanine, arginine, asparagine, cystine, glutamine, glycine, histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, serine, threonine, tryptophan, tyrosine, valine.
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18. A process according to any of claims 14 to 17 wherein the oxidising agent is added after the addition of the one or 10 more amino acids to the black tea.
19. A tea product prepared by the process of any one of claims 1 to 18..
- 15 20. A tea product obtainable by the process of any one of claims 1 to 18.